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Bulgarian says Agca's cohort held in France

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ATHENS, Greece — A senior Bulgarian official says that a second Turkish gunman who was a direct accomplice of Mehmet Ali Agca in the attempt to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981 has been located in France and is being prepared by Western secret services to give false evidence.

The second gunman, Oral Celik, would be produced at the trial in Rome of Bulgarian Airlines official Sergei Antonov in an attempt to support charges that Bulgaria was connected to the assassination attempt, said Boyan Traikov, director general of the official Bulgarian News Agency and his government's spokesman.

In an interview in Athens, Traikov said that "terrorist Oral Celik has been located in France and is being prepared by U.S. and West European secret services to give false evidence at the May 27 trial [of] ... Antonov. Western and particularly U.S. agencies want to give credence to Agca's claim that there is a Bulgarian connection. ..."

Traikov accused U.S. and Western European intelligence agencies of "fabricating this nonexistent connection to serve their own interests."

Traikov was in Athens to publicize the Greek edition of his book about the Agca case. Traikov quoted French press sources as saying that Celik, who is about 26, was given a choice by his captors.

Celik, who has been sentenced to death by a Turkish military court for his part in assassinating a Turkish journalist in 1979,

reportedly was told that he could choose between "following Agca's line that there is a Bulgarian connection, and at most receiving a heavy prison sentence but staying alive, or being extradited to Turkey to face execution."

Traikov said French authorities had not yet made Celik's discovery and detention public. The Rome public prosecutor in the Agca case,

contacted from Athens, said he had no knowledge that Celik had been arrested.

Celik is considered the "missing link" in the plot to kill John Paul II. A photograph taken by an American tourist moments after the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square in May 1981 shows an armed man running from the scene.